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SEMANTIC NOTES ON CHARACTERIZING SURNAMES IN OLD NORSE

Of the vast body of descriptive epithets and other types of "ekenames," or added names, which function as surnames in Old Norse a very considerable number are semantically of obscure origin. Names of other types are often self-explanatory, as those designating family connections of some kind. Thus, e.g., *Pálnatóki* (= Toki, son of Pálni) in the *Jomsvikinga saga*, or *Ingibjorg jarlamóðir* (= I. Earls' mother), the mother of *Páll jarl* and *Erlendr jarl*.¹ Fairly transparent are also, usually, names which have their origin in the age of the one named (*Knútr gamli*),² his nationality (*Geirr gerzki*, Geirr Russian),³ or in the name of the province he has come from (*Ketill jamti*, Ketill of Jamtland). Other classes of names are, however, far less simple. And in particular are there many difficulties in the way of their explanation in those cases which seem to have the reason for their origin in the appearance, some quality, or a characteristic behavior or activity of the person so named. It is a group of surnames of this type that I shall consider briefly in the following pages.

The Icelandic family sagas often tell how a certain event gave rise to a particular name. Handed down by long tradition these explanations are, nevertheless, in most cases correct probably. Such accounts are interesting also in that they give us some idea of the numerous factors that have operated with the different types of names. In the concluding discussion of his collection of Old Icelandic surnames⁴ Finnur Jónsson notes the instance of Tord Torlakson of the Faroes who was called *þórðr lági*, the 'short'; and yet Thord actually was a very tall man. The element of facetious naming must be taken account of as a factor that may have operated now and then in the various types.

¹ About seventy instances of such or related formations are listed in *Tiln.*, pp. 163-170.

² Who therefore in youth and manhood had no fixed cognomen possibly.

³ That is, in this case, the one who had lived for a time in the Scandinavian *Garðariki* (Russia).

⁴ "Tilnavne i den islandske oldlitteratur," *Aarb. f. n. O.*, 1907, p. 364.

Now, to be sure, an account of how any nickname or surname arose may not at all suggest the explanation of the name. What we primarily wish to know is the (idea or) ideas associated with a name when it came to be definitely used of this or that person. And ordinarily we must assume that an added name which acquired fixed usage was aptly descriptive of something about the person named. In the effort to account semantically for names of this type such a point of view must be our basis of procedure. We cannot tell, of course, to what extent facetious designations may have played a rôle in names that imply a comparison, or in those which describe manner or behavior. It is conceivable that sometimes the result would be a name as incongruous as that of applying the adj. *lági* to the tall Tord Torlakson. But, failing the evidence of this, we must assume that any name under consideration has its origin in the desire to describe or characterize and that the choice of a term is due to its apparent fitness. In the case of that important class of names which are referable to terms that, in the language of the day, were used both of animals and inanimate objects I believe that in the majority of cases the comparison with the latter was the one that was most natural and the one actually resorted to. The names considered below will, I believe, well illustrate this in some typical cases. Elsewhere I hope to show these processes in operation in recent times in the Norwegian pioneer settlements in the Northwestern states here in America.

In his discussion of the Icelandic material Jónsson noted: "den store og uensartede mangfoldighed og brogede tilfældighed, der råder." And he found this to be the case especially in his Division X, a miscellaneous group covering some forty pages of his material. Of it he says: "det bemærkes, at vi her står overfor mange vanskeligheder; ikke blot er ordene ofte flertydige, men ogsaa ofte i og for sig dunkle; og selv om tilnavnet er nogenlunde gennemsigtigt, er vi dog langt fra sikre på at have truffet det rette; og selv om vi med overvejende sandsynlighed kan sige, at det betyder det eller det, er dog anledningen til tilnavnet ganske usikker . . . uagtet vi mener at kunne se eller skimte det." Jónsson, after speaking of Rygh's alphabetical arrangement in a Trondhjem schoolprogram of 1871,⁵ classifies

⁵ "Norske og islandske tilnavne fra oldtiden og middelalderen."

his collection into ten divisions, of which the second, names connected with the body and its parts and with bodily characteristics, pp. 192–233, the sixth, laudatory names, the seventh, derogatory names, and ninth, names taken from objects of nature, may here be especially noted. Kahle's collection as first compiled covered for the most part the same ground. As it was finally published, however, in 1910⁶ he eliminated the major portion of those already considered by Jónsson, and emphasized, as the title indicates, more the Old Norwegian literature, which he examined down to 1400; Jónsson's terminus ad quem was 1300. Of his own procedure Kahle says: "Es stellte sich als nunmehr F. J.'s Abhandlung vorlag, ferner heraus, dass hier und da—was bei der Weitschichtigkeit des Stoffes nur zu erklärlich und entschuldbar ist—Beinamen übersehen worden waren, sodann glaubte ich, bei manchen eine andere Erklärung geben oder doch einen anderen Erklärungsversuch der Erwägung anheimstellen zu können. So entstand eine Reihe von Ergänzungen und Zusätzen." Jónsson's list contains about 2800 surnames, Kahle's about 1100.

It goes without saying that there might be differences of opinion concerning many names in such a large number, especially within the divisions spoken of above. It has appeared to me that Kahle's conclusions regarding a great many names within these groups and Division X of miscellaneous names⁷ has been hastily arrived at. Thus there are numbers of cases where Fritzner's definition of the term is taken over bodily.⁸ But Fritzner's definition is often confessedly tentative in such cases, or it is given for the corresponding common noun, which again is often rare and uncertain; also the given noun is only of Icelandic occurrence, whereas the name under discussion may be from a XIVth century Norwegian charter. And the latter consideration seems to me not without importance.

In my own examination of many such nicknames which appear as surnames, especially those listed from Norwegian charters, I have come to a different conclusion regarding their

⁶ "Die altwestnordischen Beinamen," *Arkiv f. n. F.*, XXVI, pp. 143–202 and 227–260 (referred to in this discussion sometimes as *Beinamen*).

⁷ Kahle adopted Jónsson's classification.

⁸ Ex: *holkr*, Halldórr: "Kurzes Rohr von Metall, das an einem Ende mit einer Platte geschlossen ist, und in dessen anderes man einen Schaft steckt." Fr.

connections and their origin. The group of names that I will consider, then, in the following pages are mostly such as appear only in Bishop Eystein's *Jordebog* or in the Norwegian charters. If in any case early literary connections be lacking it is well to bear in mind that we are dealing with Old Norwegian material. And, where we are obliged to consult the modern dialects, as we often are, I believe we must first of all turn to the Norwegian dialectal material, and to the same dialectal region to which the charter belongs and where the person named lived. But, while accepting this as a general rule, it may very well be that in the case of a Southwest Norwegian name, e.g., local parallels failing or not affording a possible explanation, some Icelandic dialect term will reveal the origin of the Norwegian name in question.⁹

I now turn to the surnames. References will be given to pages in Kahle's collection. Source and exact form of the name will be shown in each case, as *DN.*, *I.*, = *Diplomatarium Norvegicum I.*, followed by the number of the charter, place and date of issue.¹⁰

Køjukona, Guðrun. *DN.*, I, 134. Bergen, 1312. BK156. This charter forms one of fifteen written in various southwest Norwegian dialects.¹¹ BK suggests Nw. *køya*, cited for Telemarken by Ross;¹² this word means "liden Pyt eller Sump med høit Græs eller Siv." Under *køjumagr*, p. 157, BK refers to *Køjukona*. The charter forms are *køjv-* and *kæiv-*. It thus appears that we may have before us the diphthong *ei* (*æi*), and not (necessarily) the diphthong *ey* (*æy*). If we assume that it is *æi* then we have a word whose modern form in W. Tel. would have *ei*¹³ and only such a dialectal form could be considered. If, however, we assume that the diphthong in our name is *øy*, and consequently that *æi* is an inexact writing, then the

⁹ And similarly Swedish words or uses of a word in the case of persons from the E. Norw. border districts.

¹⁰ Abbreviations for grammatical terms, dialects, etc., will be the usual ones. In reference to Norwegian dialects the abbreviations of Aasen-Ross is used. Kahle's collection will be referred to by BK., Finnur Jónsson's collection by FJ or *Tiln.* I use ON for O Ic. and O Norw. combined.

¹¹ See Hægstad: *Vestnorske Maalføre II*, *Sudvestlandsk*, 2. (Abbr. = *V.M.*); p. 4.

¹² *Norsk Ordbog. Tillæg til Aasen.*

¹³ Other southw. Norw. equivalents are tabulated by Hægstad, l.c., pp. 86-87 (usually *ai*).

modern Tel. equivalent would be a word with *-øy-*. The assumption of *æi* suggests Nw. d. *keia*, vb. "gjøre sig viktig med stram Holdning og stive Fagter; kneise," which is given by Ross for Hallingdal (*ho kom keiand, han stoo aa keia seg*). Semantically this would be perfectly possible; we do not, to be sure, know whether it would be a fitting characterization of the Guðrun in question.¹⁴ But formally there is a difficulty here. In the charter in question ON *æi* is always (with the possible exception of *køijv-*) written *æi*, as *bræiðr*, *þæim*, *æigi*, *Æiríkr*, etc. Hence we should have to regard our name as an erroneous writing. However, when the scribe in the one case of the unexplained *Køijv-* writes *øi(øij)*, we are forced to conclude that he is attempting to give a written form to a name which did not have the diphthong *æi*, which he everywhere writes *æi*.

With regard to the assumption that it is the diphthong *æy* we have it is to be noted that, with the single exception of *øyri*, the charter throughout represents ON *ey(æy)* by *æy* (*hæyra*, *kæyptuz*, etc.). ON *æy* seems also, therefore, to be excluded, for in that case the writer would probably have written *kæyu-*, though he might possibly have written *køyu*; it does not seem at all likely that he should have written *kæiu-* and *køiju-*. This becomes a certainty, practically, when we bear in mind that, as Hægstad has shown, the charters of this region and this period represent ON *æy (ey)* by *æy* as the only writing in ten main charters, and by *ey* in five, elsewhere regularly *æy*, and *æy*.¹⁵ It is furthermore shown that the change of ON *æy* to *æi*, *ei*, is quite sporadic and apparently limited to certain words¹⁶ while that of *æi* to *øy* is nowhere evidenced. The forms *køijv kona* and *kæiv maghr* are noted (p. 43) and Hægstad remarks: "ser framandvore ut," and in a foot-note: Den uvanlege svagande skrivemaaten leier tanken burt paa eit framanord, tysk *keie*, *keige*, f. wurfspieß, speer (?)." We have, however, no evidence that this L. G. word was ever present in W. Norw. speech, either middle age or modern. However, to me also the writing (*øi* especially) has a foreign suggestion here. And whereas throughout the charter the

¹⁴ As there is not, to my knowledge, any further information about her.

¹⁵ L.c., p. 43.

¹⁶ Examples given for Voss, 1340, Sogn, 1331, but practically limited to the name *Eisteinn* and the word *husþreia*, and especially this region. *VM.*, p. 101.

orthography is remarkably consistent, this particular word vacillates between two writings in the only two times it occurs. This indicates uncertainly on the part of the writer, and would suggest a loanword that only recently, perhaps, had come into use. And the writing with an *i* as the second element of the diphthong both times, would indicate that he felt that the quality of the diphthong was not that of *æy* (or *æy*). Possibly also the varying initial vowel in his two writings indicate a failure to identify it with either that of *æy* or that of *æy*.

I think it most likely that the source of our name is L. G. *kôje*, modn. lit. Norw. *køje*,¹⁷ which in southwest Norw. dialects is now variously pronounced with a diphthong *øi* or *qi*: Sogn, Voss, Hardanger, *kqi*-, Telemarken *køi*-, as in the vb. *køia seg*, 'to go to bed.'¹⁸ As used in Riksmåal Norw. to-day this word exhibits, to be sure, only the meaning 'berth, bunk,' but it has a wide use in compounds; in W. Norw. dialects the noun *køi* or *kqi* (as in *te kqis*), from which the vb. as above is formed, meant 'bed' in general. The noun *køia* may very well have existed by the side of *køje* almost from the first; *køi* and *koia* (vb.) are both used dialectically to-day.¹⁹ From the context it is pretty clear that *køia* was the nickname of Guðrun's husband, whose first name later in the charter is given as Æiríkr. Olafur kæivmaghr would be Guðrun's brother.²⁰ As a nick-name *køia* would have been about equivalent to "Lie-abed." Cp. the case of *Þuriðr rumgylta*, which FJ. translates, "sængeso," *Tiln.* p. 305.

nostamagh, Bjorn. acc. *DN.*, III, 552.²¹ Borgund, 1400. BK asks: "Ist nosti Eigen- oder Beiname und welches seine Bedeutung?" No such personal name as Nosti is recorded in ON. We may compare Norw. d. *nuste*, m., "liden tætvøxen Karl," Ross, for Hall. and Tel. and *nusta*, f., "knortet Rod," Hall., and variant *knust(e)*, m., "vreden Klods," Tel., *knest*, m., "liden Knald." Hall., *gnust*, m., "Kubbe, særlig Træklods med

¹⁷ See Falk og Torp: *Etymologisk Ordbog* (Abbr. = F. and T.).

¹⁸ Vidsteen does not give *køia seg* for Søndhordland: *Ordbog over bygdemaalene i Søndhordland*. Not recorded either by Aasen or Ross (because only uses corresponding to those of Riksmåal were found?).

¹⁹ Schött: *Dansk-Norsk ordbok*, p. 455, gives both for Landsmaal.

²⁰ He represented Guðrun in the transfer of property recorded in the charter.

²¹ BK, wrongly, charter 334.

vreden og knudret Ved = *ein vranten kubbi*," which Ross gives for Tel. and Sæt. Also adj. as *ei gnuste furu*, and *ein gnuste kar'e*, "en tætvoksen Karl," Tel., Sæt. Related forms with or without initial *g*, *k*, and the vowels *e-a* or *u-au* occur.²² The nickname then probably means: "stumpy body." Bjørn receives his cognomen from being—Nosti's brother-in-law.

flotskalle, Pædhar. DN., III, 468. Matenes, 1386. BK translates "der Fettschädel," but with a query. This rendering was probably suggested by the surname *flotbytta*, *Tiln.* 289, which is translated by FJ. "Fedtbötte, d.v.s., en bötte hvori det fedt samles, der flyder (flot) oven på suppen." Cp. Icel. *flot*, 'gravy.' Unusual as this is as a nickname there can be no doubt of FJ.'s explanation.²³ But Fettschädel" is not very convincing as an explanation of *flotskalle*.

The charter in question concerns a division of an inheritance at Hogermo Fos in Jämtland.²⁴ The language of the charter is mixed Norwegian and Swedish. Aasen cites a form *flot* (q) "flod og jævn Mark," Gbr.,²⁵ and *flote* (q), "en noget stor Mark-flade." This is quoted only for Sogn,²⁶ but in the meaning "en svær bred Karl" it is used in Östl.²⁷ Thus we would possibly in the name *flotskalle* have a characterizing use of ON. *flot*. f., "flade, slette," compounded with *skalle*- meaning about "Flat-skull," (or "broad-skull.") This may very well be the source of the name. I am, however, inclined to seek the source in ON. *flótr*, 'quick, fleet,' which shows a wide use of the ablaut forms: *flot*, *flöt*, and *flut*, in the Throndhjem-Jämtland dialect region. Rietz, *Svenskt dialekt lexicon*, records under *fliota*, the adj. *flyt*. "snabb, flink," for Jämtland, and *flut*, "duktig," as *flut arbeidskar*, *flut snikkare*, for Västerbotten. In Throndhjem the form is to-day *flöt*²⁸ (also vb. *flöta seg*, 'to hasten').

²² The meaning of some of these words: barskhed, barskt væsen, may be compared (probably a later developed meaning). There is a mod. Ic. *nostur*, 'tidiness,' which seems to be a specifically Icelandic meaning development of the corresponding strong noun.

²³ So too Fr. The name Þorleifr *flot*, p. 200, BK renders þ. "Fett."

²⁴ Before 1650 a part of Norway.

²⁵ Also Ryf, in sw. Norw.

²⁶ Also *flot*, m., "mindre markflade," Rom., Gbr., Sogn (Ross).

²⁷ Cp. Värmland Sw. d. *flot*, "stor varelse," Noreen: *Fryksdalsmålets Ljudlära*, p. 18.

²⁸ Aasen under southw. Norw. *fljot*: "I Throndhjem St. bruges det meget og hedder: *flöt*."

The Jämtland surname *flotskalle* means then, if this is correct, one with a "quick head" (Peder "the capable" or "the clever").

snægg, Þosteini, dat., *DN.*, XI, 7. Sandvin, 1316. BK: "kurzhaarig." This is, of course, perfectly possible. However, another meaning is fully as likely. The adj. ON. *snöggr*, 'short,' seems in Icelandic to have been used specifically in the sense 'short-haired'—so all the citations of this use in Fr. and so most of the uses of the word *snöggur* and *snögg-* in cpds. in Icelandic today.²⁹ That it also had this meaning in W. Norw. there is no doubt,³⁰ but it was evidently not much used in this sense for it appears that no W. Norw. dialect today exhibits it.³¹ On the other hand in Norway *snögg* is used of short garments, as in *DN.*, V, 640; and this meaning is fairly widespread today in W. Norw., e.g., *snöggleg*, adj., "noget knap eller trang; om Klæder," given by Ross for Hardanger (cp. also *snögg*, adv. "knapt." N. Gbr., and *snögg*, do. Nordl.). Our charter is written in Hardanger dialect (See *V.M.*, II, p. 2). Þorsteinn is mentioned as a witness of the transaction spoken of; he was probably a native of the place. Þ. *snöggr* may then have received his name from a habit of wearing short tight-fitting clothes. I would, however, add that Þorsteinn's surname may not be this word but ON. *snöggr*, "quick, swift," which is a practically universal W. Norw. word and common in O. Norw. and O. Icel.

blæzs, Ogmunder, *E Jb.*, 455, line 5, 1394, a list of gifts to *Hafs kirkia i Solæyum*.³² BK: "blesi?" The form *blæzs* probably is to be read *blæss*.³³ Fr. suggests "*bless* = *blestr*?" but at the same time refers to the name *Erlendr blesi*, *DN.*, I, 228. Aurland, 1334.³⁴ But this prevailing West Norw. word seems to differ semantically from the corresponding East Norw. words. See, however, *Tiln.*, p. 198. Our word may contain a stem *bless-* descriptive of manner rather than *bles-*, *bless-*, descriptive of appearance (Examples, Ross, p. 49). In this case we may compare *blesse*, adj. "rask men uforsigtig med sine Hænder

²⁹ Barring *snöggur*, 'sudden,' which probably is an entirely different word.

³⁰ *Speculum regale*, 66,¹⁹ *snöggvan kamp*, acc., 'short beard.'

³¹ The regular, almost universal, word is *snau*.

³² Solör, E. Norw.

³³ Cp. *Halzstein* in the same document.

³⁴ In his *Parts of the Body in Older Germanic and Scandinavian* Torild W. Arnoldson notes, p. 14, the Norw. *blesa*, and Estonian Swedish *bläs*, "star; forehead," p. 162.

og sin Mund," V. Agder, and *blessa*, f." en rask men uforsigtig og aabenmundet Kvinde, "Dal., V. Agder, Jæd., Rbg.

cabæini, Olafue, dat. DN., XII, 69. 1326. Söndfjord? BK: "S. die Bemerkung FJ.'s." In *Tiln.* listed from *Hákonar-bók*. FJ. would refer the element *ká* to Norw. *kaa*, "Allike, corvus monedula (Aasen), Dan *kaa*, but notes that this is not found in Norw. Icel. literature; and he renders "med ben som en allikes," adding "Fritzner's forklaring er ikke tiltalende." The word *bein* appears with considerable frequency in compound surnames in ON, and it is true that these names are generally descriptive of appearance (adj. + noun, as *digrbeinn*) sometimes possibly involving a comparison with an object or an animal; so probably *trumbubeinn*, *Tiln.*, 220, and possibly *fylbeinn*, "with legs like a foal's" (queried by FJ. himself). To FJ.'s 18 occurrences BK offers five from the Norw. charters. Of the latter *meldibeinn*, *Beinamen*, p. 173, may contain such a comparison. The name also occurs in *Flat.* III, 133, 1, in the form *Olafr kaabeinn*. We seem to have no ONorw. form, for while the required long vowel would suggest ON. *ká*, vb., 'to disturb one's peace and rest,' it is not clear how these can be connected semantically.³⁵ We could more naturally connect it with the widely used Norw. d. *kaa*,³⁶ "vende Hö" (Aasen), both E. and W. Norw., "om at sprede eller lufte Hö" (Ross). This is presumably the source of Fr.'s definition of *kábeinn*. Cp. such formations as *slodefot*, "en som gaar slæbende og snublende" (Ross), vb. *sloda*, "slæbe," and *slengjekjeft*, "person som gjerne bruger slengjeord" (Ross).³⁷ Finally, Ross gives a cpd. *kaabjörk*, a Hardanger variant of *karlbjörk*, but seems uncertain of its form. *Kart* means "stump, stub, etc." If the early existence of this word be certain, the formation *kabeinn* would be quite regular both in form and meaning.

flík, Þorir, *Hák.*,³⁸ *Tiln.*, p. 237, listed under Division III, B. "Klædedragt." FJ. translated "et stykke tõi." The stem

³⁵ *Ká*, vb., is cited only from the *Barlaamsaga* and the *Strengleikar* by Fr., as also by Vigfusson-Powell. *Gamalnorsk ordbok* defines *Ká*, "skjepla, uroa"; presumably the two defining words are here about synonymous; *skjepla* otherwise shows a considerable meaning extension.

³⁶ Which Fr. conjectures to be the same as ON. *ká*.

³⁷ *Slengjebeinn* is probably also found in some dialect.

³⁸ Also *Flat.*, III, 51.

flik- shows a very extensive semantic development in mod. Norw. dialects with numerous secondary formations. For discussion see this Journal, Vol. XII, pp. 78-92. The nick-name *flik* in this case may mean merely 'a piece of cloth,' but it is more likely that it had some one of the early derived meanings.³⁹

stoltekarl, Magnus, *DN.*, III, 477, Oslo, 1388, and *EJb.* 235, Valdres, 1388. BK: "stolzer Mann." Rather, "The Distinguished" (i.e., the one of distinguished appearance, bearing). Cp. *þú riddari, er sitr á þeim hvíta hesti, er ek sá engan stoltara*, "thou knight, sitting on the white steed, than whom I never saw one handsomer" (i.e., of finer bearing).⁴⁰ As we learn from *EJb.*, Magnus S. was a native of Valdres and held at the time the office of councillor to the government.

olfuss, Eiríkr, *Ldn.*, IX. BK., p. 187, rejects FJ.'s rendering "den alvillige, forekommende,"⁴¹ and calls attention to the context where we are told of Eiríkr and Hallsteinn: *þeir áttu jóladrykkju ok veitti Eiríkr vel fyrir þeim . . .* adding: "Der Beiname wird darauf gehen, dass E. an Bier nicht sparte, und er wird bedeuten 'reichlich mit Bier versehen.'" This is to me still less satisfactory. Would BK. refer the origin of the cognomen to this event? But liberality on the part of a host on such an occasion and the having supplied oneself generously for an ale-feast was surely rather the rule than the exception, and so could give rise to no name such as this. Nor should we, in the event of such origin, expect the word *-fúss*, for ON. *fúss* means "willing, bent upon, eager for, zealous of" (as Fr: "begjærlig efter, tilbøielig til noget"), and all modn. dialectal uses show this or closely related meanings. I think, however, that the element *ol* is ON. *ol*, "ale, beer," and that Eiríkr had, on the occasion in question (if the name arose then), shown himself as very 'eager for,' or 'fond of,' beer; or the name arose

³⁹ Cp. occurrence already in O Ic. of *flik*, "et löst kvindfolk."

⁴⁰ *Karlamagnus saga.*, ed. Unger, 1860, p. 235, l. 3b. Cp. Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*; when Peer imagines the strange cloud to be a horse and himself as the rider; the steed is silver-crested and gold-shod, and he himself has gauntlets and sabre and a long silken cloak, and there are many riders with him, but: *Ingen dog sidder så stout på folen*, 'no one sits his charger so well, so handsomely.' The Norw. *kjæk* conveys exactly the idea.

⁴¹ Hence *ol* < *al*- by *u*-umlaut, as Noreen, §76.

because he was generally known to be overfond of beer. The formation would, of course, be similar to that of *ölfærr*, "capable of drinking much ale." The word *öl*, 'ale,' occurs as first element also in other ON. names; see *Tiln.*, 381, and *Bein.*, 259.⁴²

gubba, Svæinns, gen., *EJb.*, 335, 1388. BK., p. 189: "Kerl, Mann"; this is the general modn. use as given in Aasen: *Gubbe*, m., "Karl, Mand," p. 250. But in this meaning the word would, surely, not have acquired the function of a cognomen; it must have had some descriptive or characterizing force. This may not have been that of Norw. d. *gubbe*, "a distinguished looking person" (which may be only a modern use), but possibly that of "en bred Figur," Ross, Li, Sæt., Tel., semantically closely related. E.g., *gubbe*, adj., in *ei gubbe kjæring*, "en bred og statelig noget selvsikker . . . Kvinde" (Tel.). Originally, however, as applied (only) to inanimate objects 'characterized by roundness and bulkiness, hence = "clump, heap, block," we have it to-day in *korngubbe*, "bundle of grain." If this was the meaning it is an interesting early example of this type of transferred appellation. We may render the name about = "S. the square-built" (not necessarily large). In personal use the idea of 'large size' is generally attached to the word, hence: 'the well-built,' or 'the broad-shouldered.' In these meanings the name does not belong under Div. V. It is to be noted that the MS form of the name is *Gubba Svæinns* (cp. adj. use above).

strakr, Guðbrandr, *DN.*, VI, 130, Thoten, 1327; also *Auðun straker*, Fyxin (Hamar), 1398, and Guthormr *strakær*, Hvamm, Romerike, 1359. BK, p. 190: "Landstreicher," as ON. *strákr*, Fr. "landstryger," of which Fr. cites eight examples (as: *strákar ok lausamenn*). The cognomen *strakr* in our three E. Norw. charters does not seem to me to be directly referable to the Icel. *strákr*, here cited. The latter word is semantically connected with ON. *striúka*, to stroke, stroke the surface of something, start off, and to ON. *stríka*, of similar meaning = OE. *strican*, "rub, stroke, move."⁴³ Modn. Icel. *strákur*, "mischievous boy, knave, rogue," and *stráklegur*, adj. "knaveish,"

⁴² *al-* 'all,' seems, however, never to occur, and I do not find it a likely prefix of nicknames and surnames.

⁴³ See forms and meanings F & T under *stryge* and *streg*. The connection of all the forms is by no means clear. There are, it is evident, borrowed forms as well as contamination in their use.

is clearly the same word. This form seems also to be found in the dialect of Tel., Norway, in *straak*, "stiv. lang, oplöben Person," and vb. *straake*, "føre sig som en *straak*." Elsewhere such an original long vowel form is not evidenced in Norw. dialects. Our three occurrences are from charters in the region of Hamar-Toten. Here in E. Norw., as indeed in Norw. dialects in general, we have in common use a word *strak*, "straight, erect"; this would go back to older *strakr*. A form *strákr* is not found. I rather think that *strakr*, "erect," is the source of our three surnames. Aasen gives the Tel. form *strak bein*, "ret som en snor," and from Gbr. *strakje*, "en høi og rank Figur," of which Ross furnishes further examples from other E. Norw. dialects. Of this word Falk and Torp's *Etymologisk ordbog* says: "vel laant fra mnt. *strak*, . . . opretstaaende, stiv, stram, sterk, stræng, . . . dertil vel ogsaa ags. *strǣc*, stivsindet, streng, heftig." The Telemarken words cited above and all forms with *ǣ* could be referred to OE. *strǣc* in an Anglian form *strac-*, and a form *strāc* (from *strīcan*). Norw. *strak*, "straight, erect," is practically general Norw.,⁴⁴ whereas the Icel. word *strákr*, 'tramp,' is not in evidence in Norway.

stokkr, Sigurðr. *Fgrsk.*, 349, XIIC. BK, p. 198, leaves it with a query. But the word is probably the same as ON. *stokkr*, "log," hence "the stockily built."⁴⁵ Hardly in the sense of "stubborn." For the suggested meaning cp. the Norw. d. use, *stokkfött*, adj. "tyk og stiv i födderne," and *stokklagd*, adj., "rund, fyldig," *stokkvaksen*, "rundvoxen," all from Hall. (Aasen), and *stokkrund*, no locality given. It will be pertinent here, however, to observe the appearance of the form *stokk-* in Norwegian river names. O Rygh, *Norske Elvenavne*, p. 248, lists ten such (*Stokka* in Saltdalen etc.). Rygh says: "Kan enten komme af stokkr, m., Stok, og Navnet maa isaaftald sigte til ret løb (jfr. Stav-), eller af støkkva, springe, hoppe." The latter may easily be the source of the river names cited. It might be the source of Sigurd's nickname, in which case it must have had its origin in a certain nervousness in his manner.

⁴⁴ Cp. also *strakbeint*, adj., "med rette og noget stramme Ben," Ross for Smaal. and Oslo.

⁴⁵ *Stokka*, Ross, p. 763, ON. *stökkva*, may be noted.

mata, Petrus, *DN.*, I, 112, Bergen, 1307, BK., p. 199. The charter is in Latin. Assuming that we have the full form,⁴⁶ it is difficult to see how the name can have anything to do with *matr*, "food." BK would, however, refer it to *mata*, 'food' (which appears in cpds. as, *mætunautr*), and he cites Modn. Icel. *mata*. f. "food-supply." Vidsteen⁴⁷ cites for Shl. the vb. *mata*, also given by Ross for Voss, Hard, etc., "löfte og arbeide sig frem med Stang og Vaagmat, ake seg fram med matetak." Hence from a noun *mati*, "crowbar, rod?" If this is the source the name may have had reference to the stiff walk of the one named. Cp. *strak-beint*, "stifflegged."

holkr, Halldorr, *DN.*, II, 501, Oslo, 1387, *EJb.*, 544. BK., p. 201, translates: "Kurzes Rohr von Metall, das an einem Ende mit einer Platte geschlossen ist, und in dessen anderes man einen Schaft steckt," quoting Fr., who takes this O. Icel. word to be the same as the Norw. nicknames and refers to our two instances. This is clearly the same word as Nw. d. *holk*, f., a contrivance (set on the wall) for putting something into as knife, spoon (*skeiholk*). This does not seem to me a likely cognomen. The basic meaning is here not the rod but the hollowness, the opening.⁴⁸ Cp. also *holka*, f., "Fordybning i Landskabet" (Ross). But the same word, also in varying forms, shows prevailingly a different use in Norw. dialects. Just as in the above cases the sememe 'cylinder' develops to that of 'a hollow contrivance,' 'an opening,' 'a hole,' 'a hollow,' so in this specifically Norw. d. group the sememe 'cylinder' becomes "a rod, a bar, a stiff object," and so appears in personal use in such a case as *holk*, m., "stiv plump keitet Figur eller Person." Nfj og fl. (Ross),⁴⁹ and *holke*, "om en stor dygtig Karl," Gul., with further meaning change (loss of idea of stiffness).⁵⁰ The former of these two would seem to be the meaning of the name.

⁴⁶ Cpds. with *mat-* 'food,' as first element occur in considerable number in W. Norw., also in personal appellations.

⁴⁷ l.c. 118.

⁴⁸ Hence the obscene uses of the word cited by Fr.

⁴⁹ Also as vb., *holka*, "drive paa med klodset Voldsomhed, Nfj og fl." (Ross). Also adj. *holkevoren*, "klodset."

⁵⁰ Cp. further development of the variant form *hylkje*, "keitet, stiv tvær Person" (Ryf., Ross), which I assume to mean that *hylkje*, "stiff, awkward person," is also used of a "stiff, stubborn, and contrary person."

The word finds in Norw. d. an equally widespread use in the sense: "jar, stone-bottle, flask, kettle, tub," etc. For this as the possible semantic base of our name cp. the nickname "tubby" in American student slang applied to a fat round person. These dialect uses are possibly later, however, than the XIVth century.⁵¹

begla, Botolfr, *Tiln.*, 298 (Orkn.). FJ: "Betydning usikker, maaske 'en der hinderer,'" citing *begla*, "hindre" (Aasen). I do not feel that Botolf's having once, by a clever trick, frightened away an attacking party and so saved his guest's life would have given rise to a nickname meaning "the hinderer," or some similar sememe. The name could hardly have had its origin in Botolf's act on the occasion in question (the contents of a song he sang caused the attackers to flee). A corresponding word appears extensively in Norw. dialects, usually in one of three meanings: 1, "contrary, perverse, stubborn"; 2, "clumsy, awkward"; 3, "stupid, standing gaping ignorantly." The last is especially E. Norw. (also Swedish),⁵² the former two are almost general Norw. E.g., *beglen*, adj., "hinderlig, tver; kludrende," Jæd., Dal., *begla*, f., "vrangvillig og hinderlig Person," Jæd., *begla*, vb., "være tvær; kludre," Innh., Jæd., etc. I take it that the surname had its origin in the stubbornness of disposition for which B may have been known.

slagha, Jon., dat., *EJb.*, 353.⁵³ E. Norw., 1388. Fr. gives a noun *slagá*, f., "hunfaar (á eller ær) som skal slagtes," which BK gives in explanation of the surname. This is semantically impossible. Also we have to do with a form "*slagi* or *slagr*." Norw. dialects exhibit an extensive meaning development of the stem *slag-*; several of the meanings recorded in Aasen-Ross are possibly early. Semantically *slag-*, 'strike,' would be perfectly satisfactory, but there are formal difficulties here. However, it could be this if we assume *slagi* to be a wk. parallel to ON.

⁵¹ For nicknames of this meaning, cp. the name Þorkell *dunkr*, *Tiln.*, 289. Shetlandic "Norn," i.e., the remains of ON. speech in the Scotch dialect of the Shetland Isles exhibits an extensive semantic development. I shall merely cite *holk*, 'something big and clumsy; a big, awkward person; a clumsy, ill-shapen person,' Jakobsen: *Det norrøne Sprog på Shetland*, pp. 312-313.

⁵² Cp. my article on "Tunamål Words (South Dalarne, Sweden)" in *Scandinavian Studies and Notes*, V, under *begla*, p. 257.

⁵³ BK erroneously 352.

slagr, "change," in figurative use of "changeable, fickle," as Fr. III, p. 425. But the surname would seem to be an adj. Cp. Norw. dialectal adj. *slag*, "haldende" (Aasen) which would seem also to mean 'slack,' i.e., unsteady, and so semantically directly connected with the above use of ON. *slagr*. This is hardly the direct source, however. Aasen also gives the vb. *slaga*, "gaa i en kroget Linje,"⁵⁴ gjøre enkelte sving til Siderne"; B. Stift.⁵⁵ The meaning would then be: "one who sidles along," or "one who walks with a swinging gait." Both qualitative and quantitative ablaut forms occur, as *sloga*, (Senjen), and *slugga* (Tel.),⁵⁶ "gaa med tunge skridt."⁵⁷

geigr, Jon, DN., IV, 90. Stavanger, 1311. BK. p. 228, "Schaden," thus referring it to the O Ic. *geigr*, m., "skade," Fr., cited from the *Njála* and *Bp*. This is possible; but more likely it is one of a very common ON. and southw. Norwegian d. group of words represented, e.g., by the noun *geigr*, m., *geigra*, f., "nogen eller noget som "geigrar," and vb. *geigra*, "om Personer eller Ting, ta en skjæv Retning, fare ut til Siden, slænge med Overkroppen eller Armene"; also vb. *geiga*, "om Personer, gjøre svingende eller slægende Bevægelser helst med Overkroppen eller Armene" (cited by Ross for practically all southw. Norwegian dialects). The *r*-forms are here iterative, the form *geiga*=ON. *geiga*, "tage en skjæv Retning," and *geigan* f. "Vaklen til Siden."⁵⁸ In the dialects there is also the form *geigja*, in refl. use, "vugge Overkroppen til Siderne." Hence also *geigr*, surname of Jón, is in its origin a characterizing nickname given him because of his manner of walking.

GEORGE T. FLOM

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⁵⁴ In ed. I Aasen defines: "gaa skjævt eller kroget," p. 442.

⁵⁵ Cp. Icel. *slaga*, to totter.

⁵⁶ Cp. *slogga*, "gå tungt och senfärdigt," Västergötland, Sweden.

⁵⁷ Ross cites the E. Norw. *slaag*, f. 'beam' rod (for lifting), also 'large beam' (=ON. *slagbrandr*, *slá*) with ON. -á-.

⁵⁸ Fr. Defined in H T also "ganga skeivt, skeiva."